



Lessons Learned From the Combat Training Centers

By Captain Anna Maria Slempp

The U. S. Army military police are recognized as the “force of choice” because of the diverse and flexible support skills they bring to a command. Our national command authority and our senior Army leadership recognize the value of military police across the full spectrum of operations. “The military police have been under a huge, huge strain,” writes Robert Oakley, a visiting fellow at the military’s National Defense University, in May 2003.¹ Mr. Oakley also states in an April 2003 Wall Street Journal article that “military police have one of the highest operational tempos, facing near-constant deployments overseas.”² Nevertheless, the military police always perform above and beyond the call of duty.

This article is intended to provide a composite list of the MP lessons learned from three of the combat training centers (CTCs): the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), Folk Polk, Louisiana; the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, California; and the Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTC), Hohenfels, Germany. “Because even the best combat troops are [often] ill-suited for the tricky, demanding, and critical work [that was] once called ‘peacekeeping’ and [is] now termed ‘stability operations,’”³ the MP role in military operations has grown in importance since 11 September 2001. This article gives unit commanders helpful tips for a successful training center rotation.

Since 11 September, military police have performed all of the five MP functions, ranging from critical-site security in the United States to crowd-control, law enforcement, and area-security operations in Afghanistan. When military police are not immediately available when needed, chaos often reigns.⁴ The CTC unit leaders and cadre were responsible for the valuable training our soldiers received before deploying to Iraq and

Afghanistan. The value of these CTC training scenarios was evidenced by the victory of the coalition forces during the first Gulf War and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The realistic training, provided by World-Class Opposing Force elements, is the closest thing to real combat that most soldiers will experience.

Military police are constantly learning and applying their specialized skills, from basic training to operational units in the field. Military police have the reputation for being prepared for many of the operational missions that they complete at the CTCs. Overall, military police perform expertly and efficiently in scenarios such as casualty evacuation, sustainment operations, brigade support, area-security operations, mounted land navigation, temporary-route signing, and convoy/VIP escorts. However, CTC trends have revealed that there are consistent areas in which MP leaders and soldiers need additional training. On several occasions, these trends were witnessed at each of the three CTCs. In this article, the areas needing improvement are identified as issues, and the issues are followed by the recommendations from the CTC cadre.

Issue	Recommendation
<p>NTC <i>Platoon operation orders (OPORDs) lack the required details, and graphics are not usually developed to support the written OPORD.</i></p>	<p>Units that do well in this area normally articulate a sound home-station training program that requires the platoon leader and the squad leaders to give OPORDs under the observation of an evaluator who then gives them feedback on their content and presentation. The use of a detailed OPORD format—taken directly from Field Manual (FM) 101-5, <i>Staff Organization and Operations</i> (currently under revision as final draft FM 5-0, <i>Army Planning and Orders Production</i>), and FM 6-0, <i>Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces</i>—ensures that paragraphs are fully developed. It is critical for soldiers to understand graphic control measures and operational overlays completely before mission execution to ensure mission accomplishment and avoid potential fratricide incidents. Planning for casualty evacuation and logistics resupply should focus on the execution phase.</p>
<p>JRTC and CMTC <i>Units are not using troop-leading procedures (TLPs).</i></p>	<p>Platoons should use TLPs (refer to FM 7-8, <i>Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad</i>, Chapter 2-2) for daily operations. Upon receipt of the mission, leaders should establish a tentative time line using backward planning to maintain the “1/3 to 2/3” guideline. Leaders at every level must strictly enforce and supervise the TLPs. Details on TLPs can also be found in FM 3-19.4, <i>Military Police Leaders’ Handbook</i>, Chapter 2.</p>
<p>NTC <i>Platoon/squad rehearsals are not effectively translating the tactical plan into visual impressions that each soldier can understand.</i></p>	<p>Platoons should develop a standard operating procedure (SOP) for rehearsals and techniques. Units need to practice conducting rehearsals as part of their home-station training program. Rehearsals take time, and the time required varies with the complexity of the task, the possible contingencies, the type of rehearsal, and the level (team or squad) of the participants. At a minimum, an FM radio rehearsal and a map reconnaissance should be conducted to ensure that the tactical plan is synchronized, verified, and understood by each soldier in the platoon.</p>
<p>JRTC and CMTC <i>MP platoons are not conducting effective pre-execution checks (PECs)/precombat checks (PCCs).</i></p>	<p>PECs/PCCs are available for reference in FM 3-19.4, <i>Military Police Leader’s Handbook</i>; FM 7-8, <i>Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad</i>; and FM 7-1, <i>Battle Focused Training</i>. Most platoons tailor these to fit their mission requirements. PECs/PCCs need to be incorporated into the TLPs. Leaders must discipline themselves to conduct PECs/PCCs personally and not settle for a verbal confirmation from someone else. Checklists need to be suitable, feasible, and acceptable but not excessively time-consuming. Well-established work priorities and sound load plans assist in the effective use of time. Furthermore, leaders must anticipate the logistical requirements of future operations. Here is an example: The squad leader understands (but still needs to verify) that there is a significant likelihood of encountering a minefield during his upcoming mission. As part of his PEC/PCC, he has a squad member assemble and test the mine detector.</p>
<p>NTC, JRTC, and CMTC <i>Platoons leaders are not integrated into the brigade staff during planning operations and the military decision-making process.</i></p>	<p>Recommend that the MP platoon be task-organized as a brigade asset, receiving orders from the brigade staff and acting as an integral part of that staff. Also, the division provost marshal, the MP company commander, and the MP platoon leader should conduct home-station informal sessions with the brigade staff on MP functions, capabilities, and employment (FM 3-19.4, FM 3-19.1, <i>Military Police Operations</i>, and FM 3-19.40, <i>Military Police Internment/Resettlement Operations</i>), to increase awareness of MP support to the brigade’s mission. Further, recommend that the MP company commanders conduct additional training on the roles and responsibilities of the provost marshal (FM 3-19.1) and the military decision-making process (FM-101-5, <i>Staff Organization and Operations</i>) with platoon leaders to facilitate increased integration.</p>

Issue	Recommendation
JRTC and CMTC <i>MP platoons do not track their subordinate elements on the battlefield effectively.</i>	<p>MP leaders must develop and enforce SOPs that arm subordinate elements with the critical information that ensures their security on the battlefield. Control measures must be established (checkpoints, phase lines, and boundaries) and understood by every soldier. Proper reporting procedures must be maintained. Soldiers must clearly understand the current situation, the capabilities, and the most probable course of action of the enemy, as well as a detailed understanding of adjacent unit locations. Situational understanding should be developed in a manner that depicts critical information clearly.</p>
JRTC <i>A movement control plan was not developed to fully use military police.</i>	<p>The brigade should develop a movement control SOP while at its home station, and the platoon leader should continue to provide input on MP employment, capabilities, and limitations in supporting movement control (FM 3-19.4 and FM 3-19.1).</p>
CMTC <i>MP units do not effectively sign the routes in the brigade rear.</i>	<p>Be prepared to conduct route-signing operations. Have available route-signing kits or makeshift route-signing supplies (small boxes, for example). This preplanning will alleviate the need to put the limited number of MP assets on tactical command posts.</p>
NTC <i>The platoon operational orders do not significantly address direct-fire planning, which would prepare the platoon to close with and destroy the enemy.</i>	<p>To better synchronize the fight, platoon leaders should use the fundamentals of direct-fire planning. Tactical reference points, engagement areas, sectors of fire, direction of fire, restricted fire line, and final protective line are all terrain-based fire-control measures that should be addressed in paragraph III of the OPORD and emphasized during subsequent rehearsals. Threat-based measures include fire patterns, target array, priorities of fire, weapons posture, triggers, and weapon control status. These planning measures should be graphically depicted on an overlay or sketch and disseminated to the lowest level. The application of the fundamentals of detailed fire-control planning will result in the massing of the effects of fire, the avoidance of target overkill, the prevention of fratricide, and the employment of the best weapon for the target.</p>
NTC <i>Military police seldom display tactical proficiency when in contact with enemy forces.</i>	<p>The MP firepower can destroy enemy personnel and engage lightly armored vehicles from a defilade position. Learn your area of operation to identify ambush sites to avoid or use to your advantage. Develop squad battle drills during which contact is made using the least force possible, and once contact is made, maneuver the teams to gain a better position for firing at the enemy. OPORDs should cite the MP actions to be taken when the enemy is contacted and the immediate actions that each team should complete. OPORDs should also include plans to mutually support the squads that are acting to mass firepower when needed and retain the flexibility to choose when and where to engage the enemy.</p>
JRTC and CMTC <i>MP platoons are not sufficiently involved in enemy prisoner of war (EPW) operations.</i>	<p>Military police must be involved in EPW/civilian internee (CI) operations. If there are other operational requirements for the MP platoon, it is advisable to require (at a minimum) MP supervision/advisement over the processing and reporting. The platoon should enforce the guidelines for processing EPWs/CIs with the company and division tactical SOP; FM 3-19.4; FM 3-19.40; and STP 19-95B1-SM, MOS 95B, <i>Military Police, Skill Level 1, Soldier's Manual</i>, Task #191-376-4101, <i>Process Enemy Prisoners of War/Civilian Internees (EPWs/CIs) at a Collecting Point or Holding Area</i>. Additionally, brigades should develop a contingency EPW support package that identifies the necessary classes of supplies that are required to conduct and sustain EPW/CI operations (FM 3-19.40, Chapter 2). Brigades should also place the construction of the EPW cage on the brigade support area execution matrix to ensure proper focus and priority.</p>

Issue	Recommendation
JRTC <i>Units did not fully exploit the value of a host-nation liaison campaign.</i>	Recommend that MP platoons conduct detailed planning in their efforts to execute effective host-nation liaison (FM 3-19.1, FM 3-19.4, and FM 41-10, <i>Civil Affairs Operations</i>). This plan should be coordinated and synchronized with key brigade staff members (S2 [intelligence], staff judge advocate, civil affairs, and psychological operations) to ensure compliance with the commander's intent. Initial contact with host-nation officials should be conducted at the earliest opportunity to establish a viable exchange of information and support. The police intelligence interim doctrine is an excellent source for guiding the conduct of these types of operations.

Conclusion

Overall, it is evident that units deploying to the CTCs are working hard to complete their missions and take away as much as they can before going to war. With the help of technology, units are applying their newly acquired skills to keep up with the high operational tempo. However, unit leaders must not forget that the basics are the cornerstone for even the most technologically advanced equipment—if you don't know what you're looking for, you don't know where to look. If soldiers don't know what is *right*, they are going to continue to do what they *think* is right. It is the leader's responsibility to ensure each and every soldier has a drive and a hunger for *successful* and *safe* mission accomplishment. If we do not arm soldiers with the proper knowledge and equipment (with plenty of rehearsals) to solve problems, then we can only expect them to come up with less-than-acceptable solutions.

Endnotes

¹ Seth Stern, "How To Keep Iraqi Streets Safe—Bullets Not Allowed," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 6, 2003.

² Greg Jaffe, "Does The Army Really Need Additional Military Police? Adding Police to Handle Unrest In Iraq Could Tax the Pentagon," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 23, 2003.

³ David Wood, "Shortage of MPs Complicates Iraq Occupation," *Newhouse News Service*, May 12, 2003.

⁴ Jaffe.

References

- FM 3-19.1, *Military Police Operations*, 31 January 2002.
- FM 3-19.4, *Military Police Leaders' Handbook*, 2 August 2002.
- FM 3-19.40, *Military Police Internment/Resettlement Operations*, 1 August 2001.
- FM 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, 11 August 2003.
- FM 7-8, *Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*, 1 March 2001.
- FM 7-1, *Battle Focused Training*, 15 September 2003.
- FM 41-10, *Civil Affairs Operations*, 14 February 2000.
- FM 101-5, *Staff Organizations and Operations*, 31 May 1997.
- STP 19-95B1-SM, *Soldier's Manual for MOS 95B, Military Police, Skill Level 1, Soldier's Manual*, January 2003.
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